

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 01778 261745Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 1778

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CO, CU

SUBJECT: GOC REASONS FOR SEEKING RELATIONS WITH CUBA

REF: A) BOGOTA 1691 BOGOTA 801 BOGOTA 11378 BOGOTA 1494

1. SUMMARY. THE GOC DECISION TO SEEK RENEWAL OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA (REF A) WAS BASED ON A NUMBER OF REASONS, NO ONE OF WHICH WAS, IN ITSELF, GREATLY COMPEELLING. THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT, HOWEVER, IN COMBINATION WITH LESSENER REASONS AGAINST SUCH A MOVE, WAS SUFFICIENT TO BRING ABOUT THE DECISION IN FAVOR OF CUBAN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO HAS BEEN THE MOST IMPORTANT AND PERSISTENT ADVOCATE OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA. THE DEFEAT OF THE COSTA RICAN/ VENEZUELAN/ COLOMBIAN MOVE TO REMOVE THE CUBAN SANCTIONS AT THE QUITO CONFERENCE CAUSED LIEVANO A CONSIDERABLE LOSS OF PRESTIGE. SINCE THAT TIME, THE MINISTER HAS HAD A DISPROPORTIONATE INTEREST IN THE MATTER OF CUBAN RELATIONS. HE HAS EVIDENTLY VIEWED A RENEWAL OF COLOMBIAN-CUBAN RELATIONS AS A MOVE THAT WOULD, AT LEAST IN PART, VINDICATE HIS HIGHLY VISIBLE (AND INEFFECTIVE) STANCE AT THE QUITO MEETING.

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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 01778 261745Z

3. THE COLLAPSE OF THE BUENOS AIRES MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS

MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN A FACTOR IN THE GOC DECISION TO MOVE ON THE CUBAN QUESTION AT THIS TIME. WHILE, AFTER THE QUITO MEETING, COLOMBIA WAS CLEARLY ON RECORD AS FAVORING AN END OF THE CUBAN SANCTIONS, THE GOC PREFERENCE STILL SEEMED TO BE FOR A RESOLUTION OF THE MATTER WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM. LIEVANO, IN PARTICULAR (REF B), HAD ADVOCATED USE OF THE BUENOS AIRES MEETING TO RESOLVE THE CUBAN QUESTION IN A WAY THAT WOULD HAVE PRESERVED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE OAS (AND POSSIBLE RESTORE HIS SOMEWHAT LESSENDENED PRESTIGE AND BRUSIED EGO). THE COLLAPSE OF THE BUENOS AIRES MEETING WAS APPARENTLY SEEN AS EVIDENCE THAT AN EARLY SOLUTION WITHIN THE INTER-AMERICAN FRAMEWORK WAS NOT LIKELY, EVEN AT THE OASGA IN APRIL. PERHAPS AS WELL THE GOC FINALLY BECAME IMPATIENT AND DETERMINED NOT TO APPEAR TO BE FOLLOWING OUR LEAD.

4. THESE EVENTS TOOK PLACE AGAINST A BACKGROUND THAT INCLUDED A LONG STANDING GOC ESPOUSAL OF "IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM" AND A NEWLY INSTALLED ADMINISTRATION THAT HAD BILLED ITSELF AS FURTHER TO THE LEFT THAN THE PREDECESSOR NATIONAL FRONT GOVERNMENTS. DURING THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING PASTRANA (CONSERVATIVE) ADMINISTRATION, COLOMBIA HAD WIDENED ITS CONTACTS WITH THE COMMUNIST NATIONS TO THE POINT WHERE IT HAD RELATIONS WITH ALL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS EXCEPT ALBANIA. THE MAJOR EXCEPTIONS TO IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM, RE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, WERE CHINA AND CUBA. THE GOC HAD, ACCORDINGLY, BECOME INCREASINGLY INTERESTED IN ENDING THE CUBAN SANCTIONS WHICH THEY REGARDED AS BOTH ANACHRONISTIC AND INEFFECTIVE. THEY VIEWED SUCH US INITIATIVES AS DETENTE WITH THE USSR AND THE REOPENING OF RELATIONS WITH CHINA AS INCONSISTENT WITH EFFORTS TO KEEP CUBA ISOLATED FROM MUCH OF THE HEMISPHERE. THE MAJOR DETERRENTS TO A GOC MOVE TOWARD CUBAN RELATIONS HAD BEEN A DESIRE TO AVOID WEAKENING THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM AND A DESIRE TO MAINTAIN THE HIGHLY CORDIAL RELATIONS THAT COLOMBIA ENJOYS WITH THE US. THEY VIEWED THE QUITO MEETING, AND TO A LESSER EXTENT THE NEW US TRADE BILL AS OBVIATING IN PART SUCH DETERRENTS.

5. PRESIDENT LOPEZ, WHOSE FIRST SIX MONTHS IN OFFICE HAVE BEEN VIEWED AS LESS DYNAMIC THAN PROMISED, WAS UNDER SOME PRESSURE FROM WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY TO GIVE SOME SUBSTANCE TO HIS CAMPAIGN PLEDGE TO "MOVE COLOMBIA TO THE LEFT". LOPEZ MAY WELL VIEW THE MOVE TO REOPEN RELATIONS WITH CUBA AS A WAY TO SATISFY HIS CRITICS ON THE LEFT,  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 01778 261745Z

PARTICULARLY, IF AS SOME MAINTAIN, HE INTENDS TO SHIFT THE THRUST OF HIS DOMESTIC POLICIES TO THE RIGHT. WHILE THE ACTUAL IMPACT OF RENEWAL OF CUBAN RELATIONS MAY PROVE SLIGHT, THE GOC MOVE REMOVES FROM PUBLIC DEBATE AN ISSUE THAT HAS BEEN LONG AND ARTICULATEDLY EXPOUNDED BY LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN COLOMBIA.

6. THE GOC MAY ALSO HAVE BASED ITS DECISION ON THE HOPE OF TRADE

OPPORTUNITIES WITH CUBA. ALTHOUGH THE POTENTIAL EXPORTS TO CUBA ARE LIMITED (REF C) COLOMBIAS EXPORT OUTLOOK ESPECIALLY IN THE NON TRADITIONAL AREAS, IS SUCH THAT THE GOC WOULD NOT WISH TO NEGLECT ANY OPPORTUNITIES. ON A LOGICAL MARKET BASIS, WE SEE VERY LITTLE OUTLOOK FOR SUBSTANTIAL CUBAN-COLOMBIAN TRADE. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS MAY HOWEVER LEAD TO SOME TRADE; THAT AND A HOPEFUL VIEW OF AN UNTAPPED MARKET MAY HAVE INFLUENCED THE GOC DECISION.

7. THE COLOMBIAN- VENEZUELAN EFFORT, OF RECENT YEARS TO FOSTER CLOSER RELATIONS ALSO FIGURES IN THE CUBAN DECISION. THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS HAS BEEN RECENTLY ENHANCED BY THE PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP AND IDEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE TWO NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENTS. THE NEW WEALTH OF VENEZUELA ALSO MAKES ATTRACTIVE CLOSER COOPERATION AND ALIGNMENT OF POLICIES (BOGOTA 1949)

8. THE RESIDUAL GUERRILLA MOVEMENT IN COLOMBIA IS ALSO A POSSIBLE FACTOR IN THE GOC DECISION. THE RENEWAL OF RELATIONS, AS NOTED ABOVE, REMOVES ONE OF THE LEFTIST ARGUMENTS. ON A MORE PRAGMATIC BASIS, THE RENEWAL MAY HAVE ENTAILED A CUBAN AGREEMENT TO END SUPPORT OF THE GUERRILLAS (A SUPPORT WHICH WE DO NOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN TO EXIST). IN ANY EVENT, THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CUBA AND COLOMBIA WILL PROBABLY DIMINISH FURTHER THE GUERRILLAS REASON FOR BEING AS WELL THEIR SUPPORT AMONG LEFTIST INTELLECTUALS.

9. ON BALANCE, THERE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY ONE TRULY IRREFUTABLE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MOVING AT THIS TIME TO RECOGNIZE CUBA. WITH THE REMOVAL OF THE BUENOS AIRES MFM, HOWEVER, THE HOPE FOR A RESOLUTION WITHIN THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM SEEMED TO THE GOC TO HAVE LOST MUCH OF ITS FORCE. THE CUMULATIVE WEIGHT OF THE ARGUMENTS

LISTED IN PARAGRAPHS 2 THROUGH 8 ABOVE (IN ADDITION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL REASONS NOT KNOWN TO US) WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO OUTWEIGHT THE TWO MAJOR DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS OF SUCH A MOVE;  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 BOGOTA 01778 261745Z

DAMAGE TO THE OAS AND POSSIBLY LESS CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH THE US IN THE LATTER CONTEXT IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS PERSONALLY ADVISED OF THE US LEGISLATION THAT CAN AFFECT COLOMBIA BECAUSE OF TRADE WITH CUBA.

10. THE IMPACT OF THE GOC DECISION ON THE INTERNAL SITUATION, ON BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE US AND ON HEMISPHERIC RELATIONS WILL BE DISCUSSED IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE.  
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